

UNCLASSIFIED

B30

1766



CLF

200201726
United States Department of State

Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20520-6258

2003 JAN 25 12 5:33
INFORMATION MEMORANDUM
S/RS

JAN 25 2002

CONFIDENTIAL

DECL: 01/22/12

CA

TO: The Secretary

FROM: WHA - Otto J. Reich

RELEASED IN PART

B1, 1.4(D)

SUBJECT: Venezuela Opposition Marches to Challenge Chávez

The Venezuelan democratic opposition mobilized over 150,000 people to march in protest against President Chávez on January 23. The anti-Chávez march -- on the forty-fourth anniversary of the overthrow of Venezuela's last military dictator, Pérez Jiménez -- dramatically exceeded opposition expectations of 50,000 marchers.

B1

Chávez's counter-march drew 30,000 enthusiastic participants. Minister of Defense Rangel cited the peaceful coexistence of the pro- and anti-Chávez marches as evidence of the strength of democracy and respect for freedom of expression in Venezuela. Chávez ridiculed as an act of cowardice the opposition march organizers' decision to change the route of their march to avoid a clash with pro-Chávez marchers.

B1

Caracas Metropolitan Police and National Guard had ample forces on hand to ensure the safety and security of all participants. There were no instances of violence and only a handful of arrests.

B1

CONFIDENTIAL

Classified by WHA A/S Otto J. Reich
Reason: E.O. 12958 1.5 (b)

UNCLASSIFIED

6317

UNCLASSIFIED

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

Attachments:

Tab 1 - CARACAS 155 "Double Marches Show Impressive
Support"

CONFIDENTIAL

UNCLASSIFIED